(d) There is a ban on de-reservation of vacancies to be filled by direct recruitment. Further, OBC candidates get relaxation in upper age limit, number of attempts and in qualifying standards.

Four-Laning of NH-17 in Goa

*258. SHRI SHANTARAM LAXMAN NAIK: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the work on the four-laning of National Highway 17 from Patradevi in North Goa to Polen in South Goa has commenced;

(b) if not, the stage at which the project lies; and

(c) the reasons for the delay in implementing the project?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) The entire stretch of NH-17 from Patradevi on Maharashtra/Goa border to Polem on Goa/Karnataka border in the state of Goa has been identified by the Government for preparation of Detailed Project Report (DPR) for improvement under the National Highways Development Project (NHDP) Phase IIIB on Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT) basis. The bids received for preparation of DPR have been taken up for evaluation by the National Highways Authority of India.

(c) There is no delay in the implementation of the project.

FDI hike in telecom sector

*259. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to with-hold its decision to hike FDI in telecom to 74 per cent;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether the security concern arising from increase in FDI was the main reason?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN): (a) to (c) No, Sir. The

Government notified Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy for enhancement of FDI ceiling from 49% to 74% in telecom sector *vide* Press Note No. 5 (2005 Series) dated 03.11.2005. The time period for the existing telecom service provider companies to comply with the conditions set out in Press Note 5 (2005 Series) has been extended upto 2nd April, 2007, based on representations from various stakeholders.

Inland water transport

*260. SHRIMATI SYEDA ANWARA TAIMUR:
SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:

Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that presently nearly 9 per cent of our rivers are used for navigational purposes despite India having world's largest number of rivers, canals and lakes being available for inland water transport;

(b) if so, keeping in view that cost of developmment of inland water network is less than 10 per cent of constructing a similar multilane road link, the reasons for 14,500 km navigable waterways not being adequately used; and

(c) the annual financial outlay for such projects during the Tenth Five Year Plan and whether these funds were spent?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (c) As per National Transport Policy Committee report (1980) India's navigable waterway (including waterways navigable by country boats) extend to 14,544 km out of which 5,685 km is suitable for mechanized crafts. The three existing National Waterways which are being developed by the Central Government extend to a length of 2716 km. Besides, waterways of Goa, Mumbai etc. are also used for navigation. In addition, country boats of various sizes use rivers, canals etc. for navigation. Adequate infrastructure built on waterways would induce greater use of inland water transport mode.